

Melissa R Baker - [REDACTED] -
Thursday 6 November, 2025 – AM Session

Open Floor Hearings - Application by National Grid Electricity Transmission for an order granting development consent for the Sea Link project

To begin with I would like to say that I agree with SEAS and the offshore hub is the best solution.

I know that this hearing is to do with National Grid's application for the Sea Link Project but it is impossible to see it in isolation when we know of all the other DCO's which are being applied for. I am extremely concerned about the cumulative impact of all these proposed developments.

The people living in this area are already experiencing the disruption created by Sizewell C. Every day there is something on social media about delays on the A12, this road closure and that diversion with huge lorries being diverted down single track roads. Not only is all of this inconvenient but it is also potentially dangerous. How are the emergency services expected to cope? The wildlife has been displaced and is suffering due to the loss of their habitat with some 30,000 trees cut down and miles of hedges grubbed out. And this is from only one energy project. The prospect of any more is truly overwhelming.

I live in Saxmundham and drive through Sternfield and Friston every day to my place of work in Aldeburgh so my life will be hugely impacted by Sea Link as will the lives of everyone living in this area and those wishing to visit it.

I urge the Examiners to pursue their research into the offshore hub solution which is favoured by our neighbours across the North Sea. And visit Sizewell C.

OVER

We know we need the energy and we know we can do it without destroying our precious and beautiful countryside. Once it's gone it's gone. We need to preserve the habitat for our wildlife which is already struggling to survive. We need to remember that we are part of nature and that our health and happiness rely on preserving the landscape and looking after the wildlife. Please do not allow National Grid to destroy the peace and beauty of this landscape.

The constant noise from construction and ever present hum from the convertor and sub stations, not to mention 24 hour lighting, will destroy the peace and beauty of this landscape forever. Please do not allow this to happen.

It feels like the same points are being made over and over and over again and we are not being listened to. Please listen to what we are telling you. The decision that is made about Sea Link will also have a bearing on similar projects here, all over the country and indeed the world. Let's do the right thing and lead the way and ensure the health and wellbeing of the planet for future generations.

I would like to finish with a quote from Sir David Attenborough – He said -

“We have the know how and expertise to find better ways to provide power. But for some reason we are not implementing them. We must start caring for our environment and stop destroying it otherwise we will not have a future.”

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Editor's introduction

'There is no time like Spring,
When life's alive in everything'

Christina Rosetti was quite right. And don't we need a lively spring after what has felt like a particularly horrible winter, although my view might have been coloured by the boiler breaking down, twice.

This issue offers a lively selection of articles, although arachnophobes might want to skip page 7 as being a bit too lively (but they're only tiny). But please don't avoid any of the other pages where we offer Anglo-Saxon history, greedy birds, heroism and family tradition, as well as a report on the less glamorous but very important economic survey that many of you took part in. And of course there is all the usual Association news.

Please send in your own suggestions for articles or write something yourself, perhaps in follow-up or response to something in a newsletter, as Roger Hipwell has done on p. 19.

I hope to see many of you at the AGM on 24 April. Meanwhile, happy springtime reading.

Monica Allen
Editor, newsletter@aldeandore.org

An estuary glossary

The Alde & Ore Association www.aldeandore.org

The AOA, set up in 1991, is a membership-based organisation concerned with all matters to do with preserving the Alde, Ore and Butley rivers for the enjoyment of the public and the benefit to all and works by making the voice of the river heard. All matters include seeking to influence government policies that may affect the estuary, scrutinising planning proposals, and activities such as the ferry, walks, walk booklets and more.

The Alde & Ore Community Partnership www.aocp.co.uk

The AOCPP works with the community to help deliver the Estuary Plan now that it has entered the implementation phase. The Partnership involves the whole community, with every parish bordering the rivers represented together with county and district councillors, businesses, the East Suffolk Water Management Board, and the Alde and Ore Association. The Partnership will also continue to work with national agencies including Natural England and the Environment Agency and locally with Coastal Partnership East.

The Alde & Ore Estuary Trust www.aotrust.org

The AOET is a registered charity whose role is to raise the funds needed, where government funds are not available, to deliver the Estuary Plan. This will be achieved through a combination of donations, grants and charitable foundation awards that support flood and environmental defence work. Contributions from community supporters, however small, are also vital to this project. Donations to the AOET enabled an outline business case to be completed to secure government match funding to deliver the Phase 1 works within the Estuary Plan. Further donations are urgently needed to complete Phase 2.

The East Suffolk Water Management Board www.wlma.org.uk/east-suffolk-idb/home/

ESWMB is a Flood Risk Management Authority that carries responsibility for implementation and delivery of the construction works for upgrading the river walls in line with the resilience approach in the Estuary Plan. ESWMB also works with the Environment Agency to obtain necessary approvals and access government funds.

Chairman's notes

What a strange winter! Long grey days but rare bursts of sunshine, some westerly winds. These are less damaging to our coastline, but there seem to have been a great many days with chilly easterlies. The sea has had many raging days, but there have been limited amounts of exceptionally high tides since Christmas. Yet, enough to go over Orford and Slaughden quays and remind us that it is not just spring tides but rising sea level that we have to prepare for. In early March, while writing this, there have been glorious sunny days, blue blue skies, not so much wind but warm clothes still needed, and the sea seems to be at its coldest.

Maybe because we walk with our heads down against the wind in winter, we see fewer people and think that others and many things are rightly hibernating. That said, we have had some interesting winter visitors: a Great Northern Diver has been seen in the Alde above Slaughden and a White-Tailed Eagle has visited both Snape and Boyton. White-Tailed Eagles are, we understand, lazy feeders and prefer carrion. This one may have come from the group released a few years back in the Isle of Wight, which has now started to wander around the country. I wish I had seen the Great Northern, a wish since reading Arthur Ransome: I once went all the way to the Shetlands and never saw one, but yet again our estuary yields, or is a home or passing place for, so many surprises.

Signs of climate change

The estuary has seen more bird visitors too during the year. Spoonbills now arrive earlier and cranes are starting to breed in the estuary areas. These travellers' movements must relate to the changing climate. These prompt thoughts that are never far away from us about climate change and our responsibilities, both individual and collective, to address how many resources we use. With East Anglia at the forefront of rising sea level this is important. The Climate Change Committee recently produced a new report that worked logically and stage by stage through the easier and less easy changes that need to be made across all sectors. It seems that whatever we can do now in reducing energy use in our homes and buildings, transport or businesses and industry will all help. We don't need to wait to see what the next targets are: it is in all our interests to use less energy and while to do this might mean investment is needed, such as in further home insulation, other savings will result too.

Economic Survey

2024 saw two important pieces of work undertaken by the Association. First, the autumn/winter period has seen the final analyses of all the data gathered for the Alde-Ore Local Economic Study, all the survey and questionnaire responses. These were completed during the summer running into September as planned. The anal-

ysis of the results by the consultants RPA Ltd and discussion with Trustees enabled the draft report to be completed within the year, leaving final drafting editorial work to be done in January. The economic survey has been finished: it is tremendous that there was such a massive response – 735 responses to the questionnaire were submitted. It will provide us with the ammunition to defend the area. We can use this evidence to argue that it is an important area, not a backwater to be let go, ignored or walked over. Please see the article on page 10.

Water monitoring

Second, the water monitoring team have continued their weekly collection of samples, with groups in the lower estuary including Orford and Aldeburgh and upper reaches above the tidal estuary, regularly taking samples to the sample analyser based in Snape. The evidence gathered is providing a sound base with which we can spot significant changes and seek action to protect our rivers and estuary. This monitoring work in all weathers shows great commitment and is to be much valued by all who enjoy or work in, on and around the rivers

River defences

There is little to report at present on the progress of the improvements to the estuary's embankments. Hopefully by the Annual General Meeting there may be more to say. The area is a very complex one to plan for, since the walls have been remade or repaired a great many times over the last few hundred years, by a mix of individual wallmen, landowners or larger organisations. The most recent estuary-wide refurbishment dates back to the substantial rebuilding after the 1953 floods: a good job was done



White-tailed Eagle
(photo Christoph Müller)

but clay walls cannot last forever and it is the current generation's turn to safeguard what we have for the future. We need to make good what we have now. The Association will continue to work to secure progress but complex projects take time.

Collaboration

The Association works to safeguard the rivers; to be the estuary's voice, and to take care of the rivers for now and the future. In doing so we need to link with other organisations. When the Association began over thirty years ago, there were few organisations to link with and seeking to protect the area was naturally focused on what was happening on our doorstep, such as good or poor development plans or immediate river defences, to name a couple. Over time, more interests have emerged, including more issues of wider of national interest. The Association has always developed good links but there are more to be made. Within the area the Association has been closely involved with first the Alde and Ore Estuary Partnership and now its successor the Alde and Ore Community Partnership, and the Association seeks to support the Alde and Ore Estuary Trust, it being the main lead on fundraising where government grants fall short for the refurbishment of the estuary's river embankment defences.

There is also great value in looking across at what is happening or who is doing what elsewhere, near at hand and further away; to ensure we stay alert to new dangers, new technologies, new elements that can help the fight to take care of our rivers for today and tomorrow. Please let us know of anything that you come across.

To this end, the water monitoring team, as well as looking after the estuary, engage in two forms of outreach. First, meeting up with and exchanging thinking with fellow citizen science groups in the Suffolk estuaries, especially the Deben from whom we learned of water monitoring processes, which enabled a good start to the now 2½ year monitoring programme. Second, the data from the monitoring provides a good basis on which to engage with both Anglian Water and the Environment Agency: it is heartening that rather than our team struggling to be heard, as was feared in the early days, in fact the staff of these organisation are very willing to engage if they can and resources permit.

Planning

In our planning work challenging inappropriate developments, we have always sought to link up with bodies with similar concerns, such as the recent consultation on jet skis commercial licences.

A further important example of this at present is the convergence on our coastline of a massive cluster of energy projects which was described in an article by Mark Goyder in our last newsletter. While our charitable objectives require us to focus on the wellbe-

ing of the estuary, we cannot ignore the potentially overwhelming impact on the whole character of the estuary and its surrounding countryside that will come from this massive succession of construction projects. We are again building up useful links for the future so that when any pressure is needed a shared approach, each from the angle of their own concerns, can increase the impact.

Changes in the environment

Looking wider afield, the recent Winterwatch featured the impact of excessive algae growth on foraging of wading birds: that is something for all estuary areas, including the Alde and Ore, to be aware of. Or, is there anything to make of the Government's consultation on land use, which is proposing to make a bit more space for wildlife, woodland, wetland?

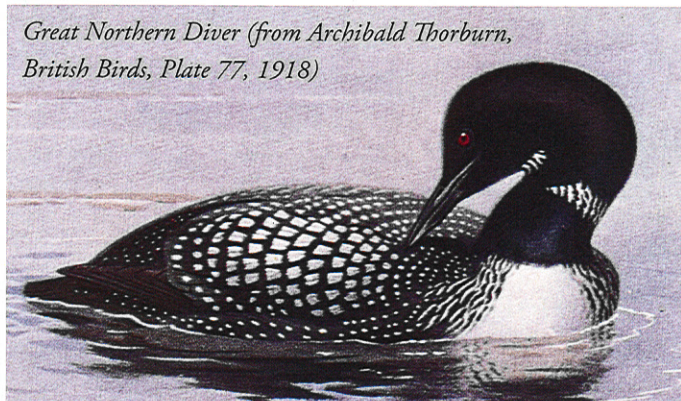
Closer to home, a group of Suffolk local authorities are seeking, through an initiative called Wildlife Wise, to reduce recreational disturbance, to find ways of mitigating the impact of more people coming as visitors and residents to find recreational locations in the Suffolk countryside (<https://wildlifewise.co.uk/>). Wildlife Wise will, amongst other actions such as helpful eye-catching but limited signage, be appointing wardens to advise visitors how to treat an area with respect, to enjoy it but not smother it. Managing greater footfall in sensitive areas is a tricky issue but a growing one everywhere. Within our estuary, people want to enjoy the amazing river but all need to respect other users, the banks and their wildlife inhabitants, so everyone can enjoy the river without cutting across others' fun and lives or the feeding, resting and breeding fauna and flora.

Happy summer!

Spring is just around the corner, indeed may have already arrived by the time you read this. I wish you all a very good spring and summer with just the right weather – wind, rain and sun – when you need it when you are near, on or in the river and its lovely surrounding landscape.

Alison Andrews

Great Northern Diver (from Archibald Thorburn, British Birds, Plate 77, 1918)





At its October meeting, the AOC heard about the progress of the preparatory work getting the Alde and Ore Estuary Embankment Improvement, Phase 1 for the Upper Estuary, ready for construction from the Autumn. The whole estuary plan is designed to secure about 1000 properties from flooding, safeguard agricultural land and freshwater sources, infrastructure, such as power, sewage works and roads, and the unique estuary environment. The physical surveys had mostly been completed, detailed designs made and repricing sought to allow updating of the original 2022 costings. Currently, early March, the East Suffolk Water Management Alliance are in the process of reviewing the costings for the project. It is hoped that the initial costings will have been finalised in time for the next AOC meeting expected to be on 27 March 2025.

The AOC also heard about the development of Wildlife Wise (originally called Recreation Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy - RAMS). The programme is focusing on reducing the impact of visitors, whether tourists or local visitors stemming from increases in housing developments, on European protection sites. The scheme is funded by CIL money involving Ipswich Borough, Waveney, Babergh District, and East Suffolk

and Mid Suffolk Councils. The Chair, Tim Beach, and Secretary had met with the new Strategy Delivery Manager of Wildlife Wise, Sam Kench. Sam Kench is appointing wardens in 2025 to engage with visitors and the team have designed and are developing signage schemes and other engagements. AOC gave him views on the estuary area and where the pinch points for action were, principally Iken, Slaughden and Snape Maltings. It was a promising meeting for further mutual discussion as the plans develop.

The AOC website also has a gateway to the virtual exhibition which explains the reasons for and likely shape of the Estuary Plan designed to enhance the river embankments to protect the area, its people, houses, businesses, leisure opportunities and its unique environment and flora and fauna from flooding for many years to come. The walls built after the 1953 disastrous flood and are now after so many years in need of renewing. Any costs on this website are not currently up to date.

AOC meetings are open to members of the public and details of time and place are on the AOC website www.aocp.co.uk.

Alison Andrews, Hon. Sec.

THE ALDE & ORE ESTUARY TRUST

PRESERVE . IMPROVE . PROTECT

The Alde & Ore Estuary Trust have been working with the East Suffolk Water Management Board (ESWMB) and other organisations to ensure funding is in place for work to begin in the upper estuary later this year. The principle behind where work starts on the estuary is governed by the Environment Agency's guidelines that work carried out the walls should not increase flood risk elsewhere.

The work is costed to comply with the EA requirements for inflation and contingencies. To aid us all in understanding what affects the timeline of work, we need to consider the process that has to be completed before work can finally begin. A grant of over £11million was announced in January 2023, principally from the EA and the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, some from the public works loan which the farmers and land owners donated to the project and the Garfield Weston award of £500,000 to the AOET. The outline business case for the work was supported by the AOET.

Surveys to understand the ground adjacent to the current walls then enable draft costings to be calculated. Several consents must then be obtained, primarily from the Environment Agency, Natural England and the local authority, some of which are listed below:

- Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP) – EA
- Waste licence – EA
- Listed Building Consent – Historic England
- Water vole licence – Natural England
- Footpath Diversion – Local Authority
- Landowner agreement

Once tenders for construction and these consents are in place, work can finally begin.

To continue the work of building up funds for the community contribution to this project, please consider donating to The Alde & Ore Estuary Trust. Visit the donate page on our website www.aonet.org.

Butley Ferry

In 2024 Butley Ferry carried over 1,100 passengers, just short of our highest number achieved in the summer after we were finally released from Covid lockdown. It was also, at over £3,600, very close to that season's record income. Despite the weather being less than generous, and with a high proportion of very windy days, we lost only one and a half days due to unsafe conditions. This is a testament to the skill of our ferrymen and their ability to assess and deal with whatever the weather and tide throws at them.

An urgent repair was carried out on the Gedgrave jetty, which appeared to have come off second best in a collision and suffered a broken piling. A new plastic pile was inserted along the old wooden one and should prove more resilient, being more able to flex under pressure rather than snap.

At the start of the 2025 season, we will need to replace some of the original, and now worm-eaten, timbers at the bottom of the Capel jetty. These will also be replaced with plastic. The worms have yet to develop a taste for it.

Last September, the strop connecting the ferry's mooring line to the mooring block parted. The boat was found and made safe by local resident Billy Coulter, who showed a great deal of ingenuity in the way he secured the boat. All efforts to locate the mooring block failed so a decision was taken to have a new mooring laid professionally. This was done in January, and I am grateful to the Felixstowe Ferry Boatyard staff for their help.

The Ferrymen's Lunch was again held at The Froize. As we now operate with two volunteers on duty each day, we have more than 20 people at our annual get-together. The cost of this would represent a large chunk of annual income, so the ferrymen unanimously agreed to contribute personally to the cost to ensure that they could meet, eat and celebrate in a manner which I feel they richly deserve. Mike Finney was presented with a 10 years' service certificate and both Mike and Lydia Finney were jointly named as 'Ferryman of the Year'.

Roy Truman
Head Ferryman



Rare spiders found on Orford Ness

Two surveys carried out in 2024 by the British Arachnological Society (www.britishspiders.org.uk), the only British charity dedicated exclusively to spiders and their relatives, have identified 55 species of spider at Orford Ness. Twelve of these species are nationally rare or scarce.

The *Neon pictus*, which had previously been spotted in only six locations on the south coast, was found for the first time in Suffolk. This nationally rare jumping spider is tiny – females typically measure just 3 mm in length – and is found only in shingle habitats.

A further four nationally rare spiders were recorded, along with seven nationally scarce species. The rare *Gnaphosa lugubris* spider is thriving in the stony coastal grass and heathland habitat, and, from the numbers counted, experts think Orford Ness could be home to several thousand.

Matt Wilson, Countryside Manager for the National Trust's Suffolk and Essex Coast portfolio said: 'Whilst the photographs we have may make them look fierce, many are so small that they were unlikely to have been found by non-experts and their equipment.'

Richard Gallon from the British Arachnological Society said: 'The rainy weather on our first survey in May wasn't ideal. Jumping spiders in particular are sun-worshippers, and tend to hide away in poor weather, so we weren't expecting to find many of these. However, despite the weather, we soon located the nationally scarce *Pseudeuophrys obsoleta* hiding in empty whelk shells – its favoured retreat.

'The highlight came when a small jumping spider was spotted clinging to the underside of a rock – this was *Neon pictus*. We were delighted to find this species at Orford, as it extends the known UK range of this nationally rare species into East Anglia. Other spider records made during the survey are also important, confirming the continued presence of several rare and scarce species on the site.'



Gnaphosa lugubris
(British Arachnological Society/James McGill)



Neon pictus – actual size is 3 mm (British Arachnological Society/Richard Gallon)



Pseudeuophrys obsoleta
(British Arachnological Society/Richard Gallon)

A chat with retired lifeboatman James Cable

Keith Martin

Dedication to the lifeboat comes through right from the beginning of an interesting and varied chat with James Cable. Dedication not just from him but also from his family as the eighth Cable in the Aldeburgh lifeboat. An hour and a half's chat barely touched the surface. Someone ought to write a book on it.

Before meeting I wasn't too sure what the Aldeburgh lifeboat might have to do with the river. Surely, it's a seagoing service? How much work for a lifeboat service could there be on the river? Surprisingly (to me), the answer is a lot. We reviewed the call-out records and, during a three-year period, 2018–20, well over half the call-outs involved launching into the river and rescuing mostly sailors in difficulty but also wind surfers, paddle boarders and, in one case, a bull (at least it beats the fire brigade rescuing cats from trees).

Call-outs sometimes involve injuries and medical support in circumstances where the lifeboat is in the best position to be able to reach the victim quickly. In one case they reached the patient much quicker than the ambulance. On another occasion a boatload of illegal immigrants ran aground and had to be rescued, only to be met by Border Force at Orford Quay.

I imagined that most call-out situations in the estuary involve difficulties at the entrance; but apparently not. In the 'old' days, difficulty entering was a common reason for a call-out, but these days much less so. It's hard to imagine the modern sailor is more competent than they used to be so maybe the reason is better equipment with good depth information.

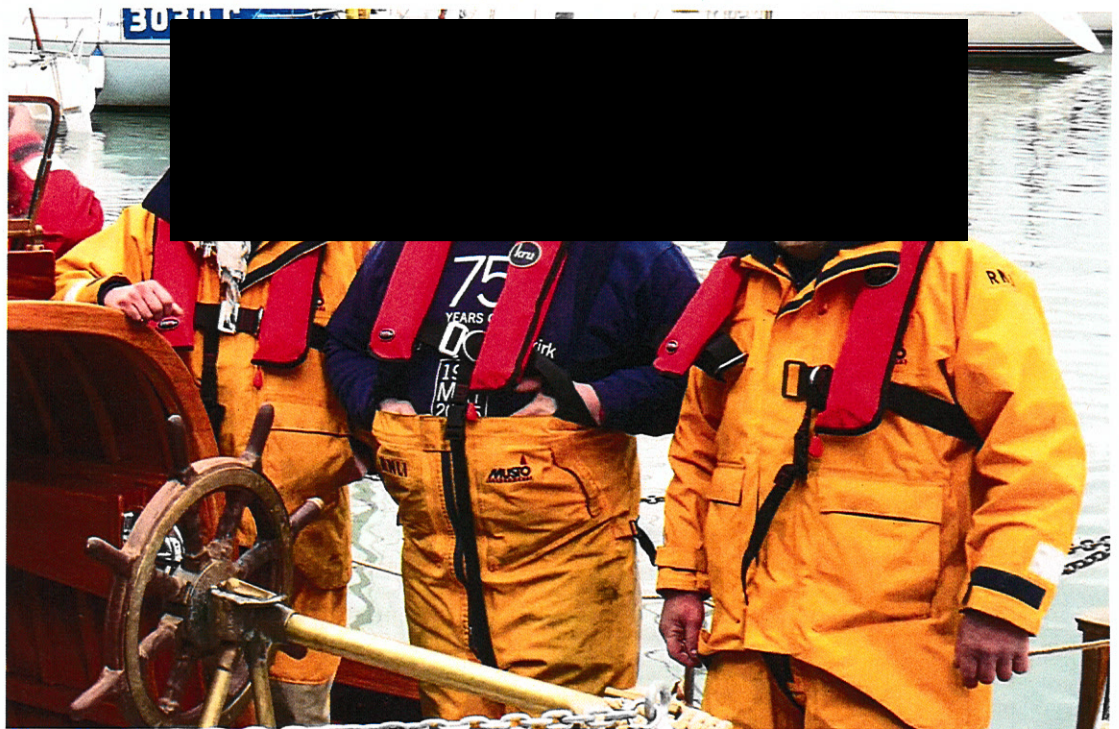
We might all complain about the downgrading of the Aldeburgh lifeboat, but when you see the statistics, the argument clarifies. In many years, the estuary is where the danger and the work are.

I suppose the RNLI is treated like any of the emergency services. A member of the public has a problem and phones up someone to help. I wonder if the lifeboat crew should be treated differently. Why should a group of volunteers who join up to save lives at sea respond to every minor difficulty that

leisure sailors create for themselves? Whatever the answer to that is, the crew themselves seem to have no resentment and are willing to turn out at the drop of a hat. It is truly inspiring.

In 2009 James took over from Steve Saint as station mechanic of the lifeboat. This is a seagoing role as engineer for the lifeboat itself but involves much more besides. The mechanic is responsible for all station assets, that is, the all-weather Mersey Class lifeboat (the previous boat) and then the Atlantic 85 that replaced it. The all-weather boat had a carriage and the Atlantic had a road-legal trailer and a launching trolley, and there is a tractor for launch and recovery. A preventive maintenance programme is followed to keep all the gear in prime condition although, obviously, there is repair work from time to time. James's skills extend to basic electrical maintenance but electronic kit is a different skill set. He's never had to use his skills on a broken-down yacht engine, which must be a matter of luck – one is always reading or hearing about broken-down yacht engines and yachtsmen needing a tow out of trouble. It hasn't happened to him ... yet.

James followed his father, Mark, into the lifeboat – they are the seventh and eighth members of the wider Cable family involved with the Aldeburgh Lifeboat going back to 1851. Another James Cable was the most decorated of the Aldeburgh coxswains, being three times awarded the Silver Medal of the Royal Institution, another medal by the Norwegian government, a cup by the Finnish government and a silver watch by the



James Cable (centre) with father Mark (right) and Steve Saint, Aldeburgh lifeboat coxswain (left)

German government. Several Cables have drowned, two of them within four years of each other. One of them, Thomas Cable, died saving the life of Newson Garrett (of Snape Maltings fame and later mayor of Aldeburgh). Garrett entered the water tied on with a safety line that parted, so Thomas Cable tied himself on and saved Garrett's life but, sadly, his line parted and he was lost. What a family history!

There has also been a lifeboat at Aldeburgh called the *James Cable*, the predecessor to *Freddie Cooper*, and obviously named after the highly decorated coxswain of the same name (as was our interviewee). And the *James Cable* is still going strong, in Montevideo, where she has been repurposed as the ADES 13 Agustin Carlevaro for marine safety duties for the capital of Uruguay.

As a child he lived in the Plantation in Aldeburgh, in the same house as he lives in now, although there have been several moves in between. His first memory of the lifeboats is the maroons going off and his father, at the time a local electrician, mostly working locally, would be called away. Sometimes he would go and watch. He was often down at the lifeboat station and knew the other families well – they even used to go on holiday with each other, to that wonderful beach at Camber Sands; rather different from Aldeburgh beach. When he talks about it, one gets the feeling of a close-knit unit, with very high morale and slightly with the weight of history on its shoulders. The same families continuing to volunteer and keeping the lifeboat going. Of course, there are many other people involved who don't have that deep involvement and are equally valuable but the deep association is to be highly valued.

He started getting involved with the lifeboat as shore crew aged 15 – it wouldn't be allowed today with modern health and safety requirements. One of his proudest moments is the day he joined the lifeboat crew. He had helped at the station on an occasional basis and had already taken and passed his VHF communications qualification so that he could start, as a volunteer, on his 17th birthday. His very first call-out came whilst the boat was exercising at sea off Thorpeness and they received a report of a boat being on fire in the river. Off they went, hauling the boat over the ramp to access the river from the sea and up to Brick Dock, arriving in less than 30 minutes only to find three teenagers having a barbecue. After 20 years he was awarded his 20 years' long-service award. That involved a commemorative visit to the Guildhall in London. In 2009 he went full time shortly before his grandparents died so it was nice to know his grandparents witnessed that promotion. Working with his father on the lifeboat was another great moment, although, for obvious reasons, the RNLI these days prefers members of the same family not to be at sea together in adverse conditions.



James Cable with father Mark and portraits by David Gillingwater

All this came to an end when the decision was made to downgrade the Aldeburgh lifeboat station to unmanned and James was made redundant. This will have been difficult for James personally but, happily, he has been recruited to work at Sizewell where he starts work shortly.

So, there hasn't often been a period in the history of the Aldeburgh lifeboat when we haven't had a Cable on the crew, but this is one of those times. Will he return as a volunteer again – maybe, but that's one for the future. Never say never. Are we going to have a ninth Cable in the lifeboat? Well, again maybe – too soon to say. Son Jack is only 11 years old at the moment. Minors, i.e. under 18, are not allowed to join the lifeboat, although they used to in the past, so, watch this space ... but what a weight of family history on his shoulders! It would clearly make his father proud and, as a local girl married to the lifeboat for years, his mother would be pleased. But he obviously needs local employment for it to be even possible.

Whatever happens in the future, the Cable family has been at the heart of the Aldeburgh lifeboat for nearly two centuries and given great service. So, it would be nice for us to believe that, when the time comes, we'll see another Cable on the crew.

Keith Martin

More information on the Cable family's service to the RNLI can be found at https://lifeboatmagazinearchive.rnli.org/volume/26/292/life-boat-families-the-cables-of-aldeburgh-suffolk?searchterm=Yacht&&page=847&_ga=2.89686034.840089409.1619459483-2081098520.1619459483

Beauty, Peace, Tranquillity, Wildlife, Nature, River and Landscape

Summary of findings from the Alde-Ore Local Economic Study 2024 Alison Andrews

The third study to take a ten-yearly snapshot of the value of the Alde-Ore area was commissioned and launched in 2024. This involved securing primary data through questionnaires completed by residents, visitors and businesses as well as using official data. The Association is extremely grateful to everyone who took the time to answer the questionnaire.

Overall results

Passion for the area has not abated. There were 735 questionnaire responses, which compares with the very creditable 559 of ten years ago, so. The level of responses demonstrated by so many completing such questionnaires, not a matter of a few seconds, is proof that the area is much valued, that it is not a forgotten corner but has a vital economy and is a centre of leisure and enjoyment of the landscape, its environment, flora and fauna. This is very heartening.

Overall, the level of spending in the Alde-Ore area, based on the survey results, is estimated at £138 million for the year 2024, slightly up on the inflation-adjusted figures ten years ago. Of this figure, £56 million was by residents and second home owners and £77 million by visitors. Without the depression of figures caused by Covid restrictions, the visitor figure would almost certainly be greater. In addition, the value of agricultural produce from the area, including the higher land above the flood cells benefiting from irrigation from the water abstraction points in the flood cells, was £19 million. The combined figure of £157 million demonstrates the importance of the area and of the protection afforded by the river's flood defence embankments.

The questionnaires also revealed that when asked to give words for why they valued the Alde-Ore area, responders the resoundingly top nominees were: beauty, peace, tranquillity, wildlife and nature, river and landscape, as you can see from the 'word cloud' on the front cover.

Who indicated what

Community, outdoor activities, music and art

Responses by residents, over 330, and by second home owners, over 110, 444 in total, compared with 267 in 2013, showed that average annual spending rose by 157% to £17,740. The questionnaire responses also highlighted the reasons for coming to the area as being proximity to the coast, scenic beauty, peace and tranquillity and a strong sense of community and outdoor activities such as walking and sailing, with almost half valuing the music and art. The activities pursued the most were, with over 90% of responders naming them, walking, visiting the beach and concert going, over 80% bird watching, some 60% sailing and 40% golfing.

Visitor spend per party or individual was substantially up, but total visitor spending, calculated by multiplying average spend per person by estimated number of visitors, was down compared with ten years ago. Much of this can be attributed to the fact that the total figures for tourist numbers dated from the period just as Covid restrictions were lifted. The total visitor spend can be expected to recover further and increase in future years. That said, there could be a downturn caused by the cumulative effect of the several energy projects planned for this part of the Suffolk coast just north of the Alde, causing visitors to avoid the heavy traffic on our rural roads and go elsewhere. That is a real danger. The value of this visitor trade assessed in this study will be used to help in the several consultations as and when they continue to arise in relation to these projects.

Returners

Interestingly, many of the visitors are 'returners'. Almost 30% of the surveyed visitors came very often, more than 12 times a year, another third between 5 and 12 times, and another third 2 and 4 times, with only 10% being first timers. Their main reasons for coming, from many different parts of the England, were scenery, landscape, peace and tranquillity. The table below shows the heavy preponderance of visitor activities being walking, sightseeing, visiting the beach, and over 50% reporting concert going, antiques, bird watching, boat trips and shopping.

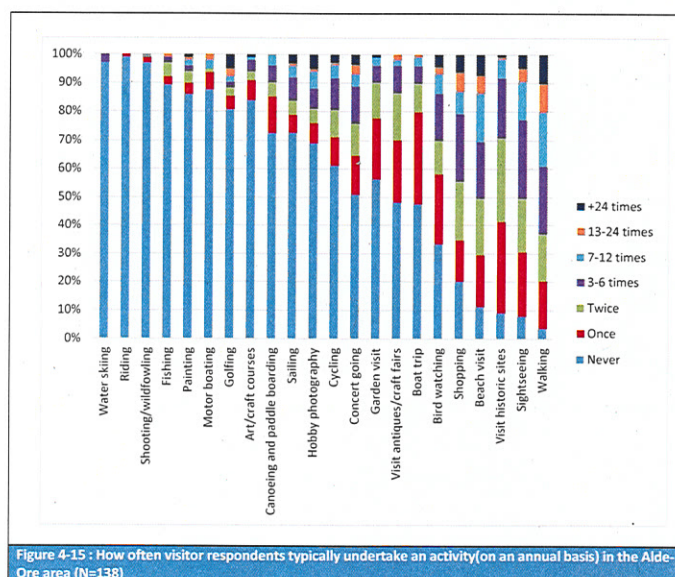


Figure 4-15 : How often visitor respondents typically undertake an activity (on an annual basis) in the Alde-Ore area (N=138)

This area is indeed a haven for rest and relaxation for both those who live here and those who visit it. The evidence the survey questionnaire has provided will be very valuable in all the occa-

Sailing and waterborne activities

[illegible]

Figure 4-22: Word cloud covering what sailors most value about the Alde-Ore area. (n=124)

Importance to business

Of the businesses that responded, 80% emphasised the importance of the estuary to their businesses. While it could be argued that it is more likely that businesses that benefit from the existence of the estuary would respond to the survey requests, it remains the case that 70 % of those responding had annual turn-overs above £250,000 and half of those were over £1million. So, the estuary is important to the local economy.

Lastly, while this time we had no specific responses from the reserves or the wildfowlers (who may have completed a home owner or visitor form), we know that there is a constant flow of visitors to reserves, and the Wildfowler Association, whose members are also members of the Association, have not changed significantly. In the last survey it was estimated expenditure related to them was about £0.65 million. And while the questionnaire may have been filled in by visitors to Orfordness reserve, we understand that there are some 32,000 visitors going over there each summer.

What next?

We now have a series of three studies made ten years apart all showing how much the area is worth and how it is valued. The two earlier reports were very helpful in building the case justifying the expenditure and for securing government grant of some £11 million to repair the river embankments in the upper Estuary.

Thank yous

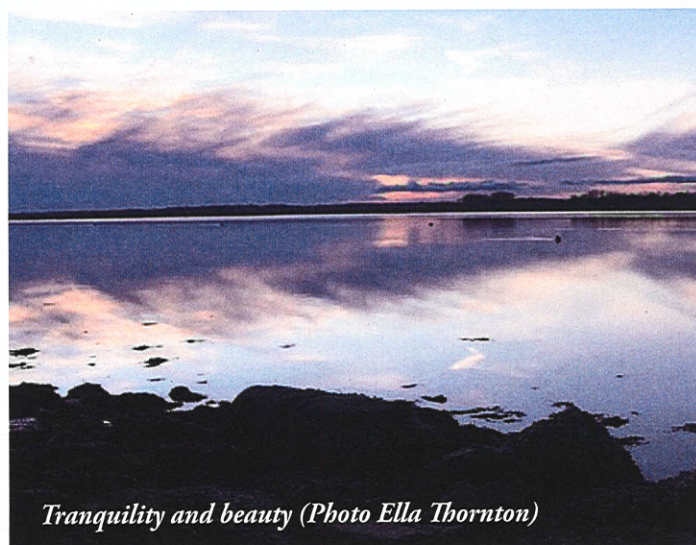
I would like to end with particular thanks not only to all of you who completed the questionnaire and persuaded friends and relations to do so, but to Monica Allen, Keith Martin, trustees, Sara Hinton, member, and Matthew Hunnybun, ferryman, and all on the Butley Ferry over the weekends of the survey who helped me distribute and encourage visitors to complete it too.

Alison Andrews

Postscript: Methodology

The Association contracted with consultants Risk and Policy Analysts Ltd. They had carried out the 2013 survey and work very closely with East Suffolk Water Management Board in the preparation of the business cases seeking grants for the estuary embankment walls improvements. The aim was to get results which were comparable or compatible with the previous survey results. Slightly frustratingly, it turned out that in the preceding ten years a number of government and local statistic units have changed making comparability less easy. Also, the most recent figures of total visitor numbers in Suffolk relate to 2021, just when the country was emerging from Covid restrictions, which means that the base figures from which to calculate spending based on individual spend is depressed. Nevertheless, despite that, the spending in the Alde–Ore economy has not declined. We now have a full report that is as comparable as possible with the earlier study and still emerges with a positive view of the area.

The full report is available on the website: www.aldeandore.org.



Tranquility and beauty (Photo Ella Thornton)

An East Anglian puzzle

Roy Truman

History happened. Unfortunately, it didn't always leave a nice, clear account of itself. Researching history is a bit like doing a jigsaw without the benefit of the picture on the box lid. You get a few pieces to fit, and you think you know what it looks like. You add a few more pieces and realise it's not that at all. By adding more and more pieces, we get a much clearer picture, but there may be some pieces missing which refuse to be found, so we must speculate as to what they may have added to the whole.

Our own little corner of the universe, the Alde, Ore and Butley rivers and their surrounding area, is, to the modern mind, a quiet backwater and a haven of tranquillity. Compared to large swathes of the country, it certainly is, but go back a few hundred years and it was at the centre of an emerging kingdom, a hub of technology and culture. How do we know this? Because more and more pieces of the jigsaw are emerging, and it is changing our perspective of our 'local history'.

The 'Dark Ages' were so called because little written evidence survives. The Romans had cleared off by about AD410 and, if my old History teacher is to be believed, they took their culture, technology and all the writing implements with them. They certainly left a void, but voids are there to be filled and Northern European tribes, particularly the Saxons in our area, came over, settled in with the natives and built a new culture.

The pieces of the jigsaw

Most of what was written about this post-Roman, pre-Viking period was written later, most notably by the Venerable Bede

in the 8th century and in the epic poem *Beowulf*, sometime between the 7th and 10th centuries. These are recorded from verbal accounts, the stories told in the halls and the information passed around through chance meetings of travellers. They are not physical evidence but, when put together with archaeology, they can help glue the pieces together.

Perhaps the first pieces were the discoveries at Snape of a huge burial ground and the ship burial, first excavated and recorded in 1862 by Septimus Davidson (see *AOA Newsletter* 58, 2022). This burial ground had been robbed in the past so datable finds were in short supply. The ship remains were drawn and recorded but it remained no more than a local curiosity and was forgotten for many years. It was clear, however, that a ship burial, and the only one known of at that time, must have been for someone of very high status. Why, though, would this be done in this rural backwater?

The discoveries made at Sutton Hoo by Basil Brown in 1938–9 are well documented and they threw a new light on the 'Dark Ages'. The skills demonstrated in jewellery making, metalworking and shipbuilding, amongst others, showed a level of trade and communication not previously considered. The fusion of religions alluded to and the obvious sophistication of their society made it clear that this burial ground must be part of a greater cultural centre, but no evidence of a town or village has been found near this site.

Burrow Hill, which overlooks the Butley River, was excavated by Basil Brown in 1946 and again by Valerie Fenwick in the late



Excavations at Rendlesham in 2022. (Photo: Rendlesham Revealed Suffolk County Council – Jim Pullen)

1970s. This 'hill', once an island, was found to have been an Anglo-Saxon fortified settlement. Later it was believed to have become a religious settlement, a precursor, perhaps, to Butley Priory. As an island it was suited to this, being isolated, with good grazing and fishing, but why put a fortified settlement in this place? It could, of course, just be protecting itself, or maybe it had a greater purpose.

The Venerable Bede spoke of 'Rendlaesham' in his 8th-century work *An Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. He referred to it as 'the King's village'. Its location, however, remained a mystery. Its discovery was triggered by crime! In 2007, landowners reported incidences of illegal metal detecting by 'nighthawkers'. These people work at night, without permission, and do not record their finds. A pilot project was set up with the cooperation of the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, the landowners and a group of four responsible and experienced detectorists. The area was surveyed, and the location of all finds recorded. Thousands of objects were recovered, and the greatest concentration was from a 50-hectare area. A geophysical survey was also conducted, and the combined results revealed tantalising clues to the high status of the site, including the possible outline of a large building.

Confirmation of this was through an amazing community archaeology project, *Rendlesham Revealed*, led by Suffolk County Council and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, involving over 400 volunteers. Along with a small team of experts and professionals, local school children, carer groups, the general public and archaeological societies spent four years between 2020 and 2024 excavating and recording the thousands of objects and the features of the site that demonstrate the range of crafts, skills, professions and trades that took place at this royal site. Metalworking, including working with precious metals, minting coins (a major development of the time), weaving, pottery making and working with bone and antlers were all carried out in the area.

The great hall itself was found to be a huge structure measuring 23 metres by 10 metres. This 'Royal Palace' at Rendlesham sits neatly between, and is contemporary with, the burial grounds of Sutton Hoo and Snape and paints a great picture of a vibrant and sophisticated society particularly during the 6th and 7th centuries.

What pieces might still be missing?

The picture is getting clearer, but the jigsaw is nowhere near complete. The fortification on Burrow Hill was probably protecting the palace at Rendlesham from unwelcome visitors from the North Sea. The Butley River was navigable almost as far as Butley (before being blocked off at Butley Mills some 400 years later) and presented much quicker, and direct, access to the sea for coastal trading ships than the longer, more circuitous journey up the River Deben. The highest navigable point on each river was about 3 or 4 miles from Rendlesham so there was no advantage to be gained in sailing the extra 6 miles up the Deben. If this was the case, Burrow Hill assumes a much greater importance, historically. Towards the end of the 9th century, Ipswich emerged as an important town during the Viking-dominated period and Rendlesham declined and eventually disappeared leaving the Alde and Ore area as a sleepy backwater. Its secrets vanished under the sandlings until good luck, good research or criminal activity have brought them back to our attention and given us another piece for our jigsaw.

We can only guess at what might be hidden under the large tracts of modern forest or under the runways and infrastructure of the airbases of Rendlesham and Woodbridge. They were developed in times of need and there was little thought given to archaeological surveys. Nowadays, any large infrastructure development must include a historical survey before the bulldozers go in. The history is there, under our feet waiting to be discovered.

For more information on the Rendlesham project visit <https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/rendleshamrevealed>



Burrow Hill from Boyton Dock

A 'green Tardis' and other improvements in water quality to look forward to

Miv Hall

Since our last newsletter there have been a number of significant announcements on water industry improvements generally and proposals for achieving better waste water treatment in particular. As we go to press with this article, the newly formed Independent Water Commission (IWC) has made a call for evidence from the public, environmental groups, investors and others as to what this improvement should look like.

If you missed it, the IWC was set up in October 2024 to deliver the first review of the water sector regulatory system since privatisation back in 1989. Since then, first, Ofwat completed its Price Review 24 last December. This will allow water companies to increase their charges by, in the case of Anglian Water, 29 per cent over the next five years, with a substantial proportion of spending focused on environmental improvements such as reduction in untreated sewage releases and removal of phosphorus from treated effluent. In return, Ofwat expects 'rapid and substantial improvement for both customers and the environment'.

Then, Sir Jon Cunliffe, the Commission's chairman, made a speech at the call for evidence on 27 February this year. He noted: 'The Commission's initial work has highlighted a range of serious and often interlocking concerns. Ambitious changes will be needed to address these concerns and rebuild trust in the system

that has broken down on all sides – customers, environmental groups, investors and companies.'

With this need for change being recognised by both the regulators and the regulated, our monitoring work in providing evidence for water quality in our river system remains as relevant as when the project began in late 2022.

Alongside our regular testing we have continued our engagement work with others. We are pleased to welcome Richard Cooper and his collaborators who will be water testing on the river Ore from Framlingham to Marlesford as an independent citizen science group. Their work will complete the picture of the Alde–Ore river basin as a whole and will bring focus to the second largest waste water treatment works in the catchment at Framlingham.

We have also had a positive response from Anglian Water, who devoted six staff members to a fact-finding visit to their Gedgrave site, the subject of our ongoing monitoring of an unusual pattern of emissions from this works (previous Newsletters passim). Armed with our data, they will be investigating the source of this arising in the coming weeks.

From time to time we reflect where our mission of water quality testing has taken us. While the first aim was to assess the state of

the waters in the estuary where there are so many water users, we have also been spending our time in the upper reaches of our river system: this is important, not least because what comes down the inland river lengths into the estuary will impact on the estuary itself.

Further, from a habitat perspective, the boundaries are not as clear-cut as a map would suggest. For example, the resurgent population of otters in East Anglia have the potential to colonise both fresh and saltwater section of our rivers and their hunting ranges probably straddle both. The sight of an otter family on our salt marshes would, without doubt, be a delight to the many naturalists that visit our shores.

Another example illustrating how interconnected river habitats are was brought to our attention recently courtesy of the BBC's Winterwatch series. Work by the University



The 'green Tardis'. Phosphate removal equipment, Benhall WWTW



Fromus flood plain showing new access road, culvert fencing and new planting for wet woodland/fen meadow compensatory habitat – view to the south

of Bournemouth has shown that nutrient pollutants (nitrates and phosphates) originating from waste water treatment works (WWTWs) in Poole Harbour contribute to accelerated growth of algal mats on the tidal mudflats of this estuary environment. These mats reduce the diversity of invertebrates living beneath in the mud and prevent short-billed wading birds from accessing this food source. This study more than justifies our attention to the contribution that WWTWs and other diffuse sources of nutrient pollution make to the environment of the Alde and Ore Estuary. Any impairment to these important habitats will certainly affect the public enjoyment of our estuary for which we act as stewards.

Meanwhile, where we have been monitoring it is heartening to see some of the promised changes taking shape. Our two largest WWTWs, at Benhall and Framlingham, are both scheduled to have their treatment process upgraded to remove phosphorus to an environmentally acceptable level of 0.1 parts per million (or 1 gram of phosphorus in 10 tonnes of water). We monitor below the treatment works at Benhall and are looking forward to seeing these process improvements deliver a measurable reduction in the phosphate discharges to the river Fromus and hence to the estuary.

On the advice of Anglian Water we were told to be on the lookout for a 'green Tardis', which houses the equipment at Benhall. From the photographic evidence opposite it looks as if Dr Who will be spending more time in Suffolk and that work is ahead of schedule.

While in the Benhall area, we have also updated our monitoring of the compensatory habitat project being carried out by EDF/Sizewell C. You may have seen the base for the works in the field by Snape Watering. The project's aim is to create fen meadow and wet woodland habitat to replace similar habitat taken in the construction phase of the new nuclear power station. This will be done by drainage works and land forming activities to raise the water table in parts of the river Fromus flood plain north of the A1094 near to Friday Street.

Despite removing substantial amounts of top soil in preparation for planting the required plant species, there appears to have been minimal impact on the chemical quality of the Fromus during the excavation phase. Most of the work appears to be completed but the re-alignment of the drainage system requires us to change our sampling point to ensure we get representative results. Once established, this habitat will be an interesting destination for naturalists, but issues of future stewardship and public access remain unclear at this point.

A bill for the job: how wading birds feed

Monica Allen

The Alde and Ore estuary is covered in several international environment protection designations, many of which relate to winter feeding and migrating birds and some to breeding. Such an important place for birds owes so much to the estuary's long intertidal mudflats and saltings, and Monica Allen has sought to find out how and why.

I'm not a dedicated bird watcher, but strolling along the banks of the estuary, watching the wading birds going about their daily business, I wonder what they are eating and how they find it. How, for example, does a wader find a juicy titbit in the murk of the water without sticking its head under water? Why do some birds have long elegant beaks and others short stubby ones?

I may curse the mud when our dog comes back covered in it, but the estuary's magical mudflats, saltmarsh and tidal creeks provide a banquet for the birds, harbouring enormous populations of lugworm, ragworm, crustaceans and molluscs inhabiting the mud at different levels. But how do they get to the food they need?

Bill size

Unsurprisingly, the length and type of bill play an important part in how they catch food. The variations in bill shape and size allows them to exploit different food sources ensuring there is enough for everyone. The bills of the females tend to be longer and slimmer than the males, helping to reduce direct competition for food between the males and females.

It is not just length that makes a difference. Some species can even change the shape of their bill depending on what type of food they eat, due to their bills continuously growing – the oystercatcher (see below) is a good example of this.

Flexibility

At first sight, birds' bills seem to be rigid structures, but most birds can move the upper bill in relation to the skull. Waders have an extra flexibility to their bills known as distal rhynchokinesis, where a section of the upper bill near the tip can bend independently of the rest of the bill. This action opens the tip of the bill wide enough to seize prey, even while buried deep in mud or wet sand. Some researchers think that this mechanism also saves time and energy in transporting prey into the mouth. Not only are waders

able to flex the mandibles upwards, but it is also probable that many species have some limited ability to bend the upper mandible downwards. As only a minimum movement is required it is hard to spot this in the wild.

Sensory receptors

A second key feeding adaptation used by wading birds probably first appeared

in their dinosaur ancestors. Sensory receptors known as Herbst corpuscles are found in all birds, but waders have more of these receptors than most, packed in the tips of their bills. The receptors in the bill sense vibrations and pressure changes so the bird can detect prey movements, even bubbles.

Feeding techniques vary

Here are a few individuals who demonstrate different methods of catching prey.

Curlews, mostly winter visitors here, are omnivores but chiefly feed on invertebrates both near or on the surface of the water and by probing deeply into the mud. Their very long downward curving bill lets them reach into more spaces than their straight-billed competitors and they spend a lot of time turning and twisting their heads to wrinkle out their prey. And a curve enables them to detect prey by touch over a wide area.

However, a curved bill is much weaker than a straight bill and so it has strengthening structures inside to prevent it from breaking in heavy mud. This means there is less room for a long tongue, so curlews have to jerk their heads back to throw their prey into the back of their throats.

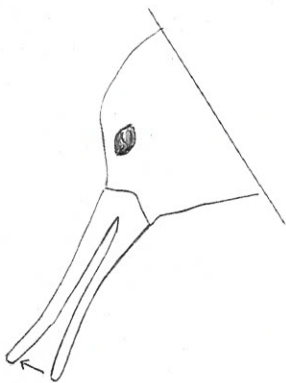
Curlews feed on agricultural fields as well as on mud flats. Those seen in the fields are more likely to be males and those on the estuary are more likely to be females. The difference in habitat use probably reflects the fact that longer bills enable females to find more intertidal worms and be more efficient feeders when probing. Loss of the inland sites would be likely to affect males disproportionately, with implications for the wider curlew population.



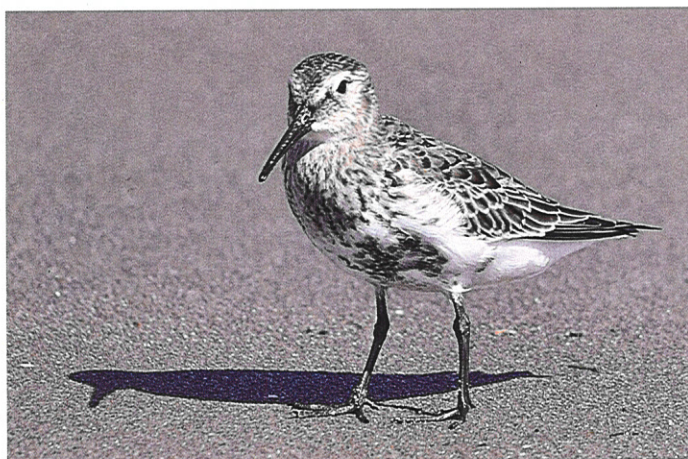
Curlew (Premek Hajek)

The **avocet** uses its long, slim, curved bill to 'scythe' from side to side in shallow water to feed on invertebrates, mostly small crustaceans, worms and insects.

The sturdy bill of the **oystercatcher**, carrot-like in shape as well as colour, is a familiar sight. Studies show that more than 50 per cent of an oystercatcher's diet (small crabs, invertebrates and molluscs, but rarely oysters) consists of food stolen from other oystercatchers, which they harass into giving up their prey. Whether by thuggery or by probing the surface of the mud, oystercatchers have two main ways to get hold of a meal:



Rhynchokinesis



Dunlin (Mick Lobb, Creative Commons)

hammering and stabbing. Hammerers, with shorter, chisel-shaped bills, batter their way into the weaker parts of a shell to reach the prey inside. Stabbers, with longer, pointier bills, can prise apart the two parts of the shell.

Oystercatchers' bills grow at the rate of 0.4mm a day (a human fingernail averages 0.1mm a day), which enables them to change their bill shape according to what food is available. If, for example, an oystercatcher goes inland, in less than two weeks its bill becomes honed in order to develop a more delicate picking technique to find earthworms.

Dunlins, another of our winter visitors, have a medium-length bill that can vary from straight to a slight down-curve, enabling them to exploit different food resources. They forage by making rapid shallow probes in their immediate area, then walking forward. The prey they consume include earthworms, marine worms, insects, spiders, snails, mussels, small clams, and amphipods. Dunlin also eat small amounts of plant matter, mostly seeds, and on rare occasions they eat tiny fish. They consume their prey immediately, using rapid bill movements and water tension in the bill to carry prey up to the mouth.

The short bills of smaller waders mean they can't probe as deep into the sediment. **Lapwings** largely pick up food from the ground and the principal use of estuarine habitats has been as a safe roost with the birds largely feeding inland. However, changes in agricultural land management appear to be increasing the numbers of lapwing feeding on mudflats at low tide.

The several species of **plovers** tend to feed on whatever is lying on the mud surface, including cockles, small shellfish, marine snails, lugworms, ragworms and bristle worms. They forage by standing and watching, running forward, pecking, then repeating. Some plovers have mastered a foraging technique known as foot trembling, which involves rapidly vibrating one foot, causing the surrounding sediment to almost liquify, resulting in any prey nearby to float to the surface – an alternative explanation is that the vibration makes prey move and can thus be easily spotted.

Eurasian spoonbills used to come to the estuary mainly in the autumn, now they appear more often. They primarily feed on small aquatic animals, including fish, amphibians, crustaceans, and insects. Spoonbills find their food by wading through shallow

water while sweeping their partially open bill from side to side through the water. The flat bill minimises drag, and grooves in the spoon-shape are filled with sensory cells. Spoonbills position the prey between the tips of their bill before throwing it into their throats.

Impact of environmental changes

On p. 15 Miv Hall has referred to the BBC Winterwatch programme in January that looked at the problem of algal blooms in Poole Harbour caused by farm run-off and wastewater treatments. A layer of algae prevents the shorter billed birds from reaching the top layer of food in the mud and the algal growth diminishes the density and diversity of the invertebrates on which so many birds depend. Godwits are particularly threatened by this. We are fortunate that our estuary doesn't appear to have a problem, but it shows why we need the Association's water monitoring team to carry on their good work.



Black-tailed godwit (geograph.org)

In my limited research for this article, I discovered that there are differences of opinion on how and why waders eat as they do – and I've tried to reflect some of the uncertainties. The Alde and Ore Estuary provides us with so many opportunities to enjoy all these birds: there will be many readers who know far more about this subject than I do, so feel free to comment on and add to anything I have said.

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Jet skis

At the turn of 2024 the East Suffolk Council put out for consultation: 'The Council is aware that a Jet Ski hire business has commenced operating on the River Deben. Jet Skis that are let out for hire to the public must be licensed by the Council under Section 94 of the Public Health Act Amendments Act 1907. If the Council adopts a policy of refusing to licence Jet Ski operators unless exceptional circumstances apply, then, Jet Skis will no longer be allowed to be let out for hire in the East Suffolk district.'

Jet Ski is a brand name, frequently used generically for personal watercraft, and we have used it generically (and lower case) in this article.

Accordingly, the Alde and Ore Association submitted a lengthy response, having had a discussion among trustees and ascertained that none of the formal landing/launching places for other water craft in the Alde and Ore would allow jet skis. The case the Association made turned out to be similar to a very high proportion of the more than 350 responses submitted to the Licensing Department.

The Association's main reasons for not licensing jet skis and so encouraging jet ski activity in the Deben or any Suffolk estuary included:

Jet skis are dangerous to humans and wildlife (they can reach speeds of up to 60 mph, with no brakes, and are thus incompatible with the main forms of water use); they would disturb wildlife habitats, contravening wild life protection orders; they would damage the saltings with their wash; and they would cause noise and fuel pollution.

The Association also responded in detail to the consultation on what conditions and specifications and enforcement would be needed if licensing were allowed. These included that waterskiing was already officially confined to one area in the lower Ore. (Full details are on the Association website www.aldeandore.org/index.php/planning/)

At the Licensing Committee meeting on 20 January 2025, there was a very long debate among councillors with points ranging from incompatibility with other users and with the environmental protection provisions in the Suffolk

estuaries, the physical conformation and shape of the estuaries compared with the open sea where jet skis could move more freely, and problems of enforcement, to, on the other hand, not wishing to restrict people's rights to do any particular activity.

In the end there was a tightly contested vote with five against allowing licensing of commercial jet-skis and four in favour. This means that licensing of commercial jet skis in the East Suffolk area will not be allowed. The current position remains that private individuals could still use jet skis but, from the Alde and Ore point of view, none have been seen for a very long time and none of the public launching places would allow them.

The River Deben Association face a rather different situation having more individual/private users. The RDA have commented that the decision does not affect private jet skis, which are a much greater proportion of the threat to the tranquillity of the Deben Estuary. This threat would be nullified if all boat and jet ski users knew about and adhered to the 30-year-old Deben Estuary Bylaws (<https://www.riverdeben.org/.../12/River-Deben-Byelaws.pdf>). At the East Suffolk Council meeting, it was said that no fines had ever been issued relating to these bylaws. The RDA, supported by the Deben Estuary Partnership, will shortly be circulating a survey to be used to inform decision makers about the community's views on the bylaws, speed limits and enforcement, and whether the bylaws should be amended to have an outright ban on jet skis on the Estuary as is the case on the Oulton Broad.



(Photo David White @ Unsplash)

Orford Town Hall revisited

Roger Hipwell

As we learned in Colin Chamberlain's article in the Autumn Newsletter 62, Orford Town Hall has been a centre of action and activities in the Alde and Ore area: the town hall has seen many meetings and exhibitions on developing and managing plans to keep the estuary defences in good heart as well as the many other town matters. Roger Hipwell gives an insight into rising to the challenge to meet new demands such an important public space must reach.

It was interesting to read about the history of Orford Town Hall in the last edition of the Newsletter, and I would like to add to Colin Chamberlain's account a little about the major restoration of the building that coincided with its centenary in 2002.

Orford Town Hall was built in 1902 and provided a popular venue for the community to celebrate events. However, towards the end of the 20th century the building was in a sorry state and was in danger of being closed to the public on health and safety grounds. The Disability Discrimination Act in 1995 put in place new measures to ensure that all public buildings were accessible to all and had suitable facilities. The Town Hall was lacking in these areas and the New Orford Town Trust commissioned two local architects to develop and manage a scheme that would bring the Town Hall into the 21st century.

The scheme devised by Paul Lennard and John McAdam required extensions and upgrades to include disabled access, two new meeting rooms, a new kitchen and toilet facilities whilst being sympathetic to the grade II listed status of the building, the multi-level topography of the location and the need to raise sufficient funding to undertake the work. A planning application was submitted in May 1998 with planning approval and listed building consent received in July of that year.

A local fundraising team was put together to raise an estimated £265,000 for the work, although this later increased to over £300,000 following the discovery that the original town hall had been built over a well shaft and additional engineering

work was required to stabilise the building. During this period Paul Lennard was replaced as architect by Messrs Hollins of Framlingham while John McAdam continued as project manager with Don Ballentyne, Chairman of the Town Hall Steering Committee.

The fundraising team organised a number of events including an Edwardian Ball funded by a local business, an auction, garden visits, pyramid lunches, bridge lunches, bonus ball competition and line dancing. With pledges from Suffolk Coastal District Council, Orford and Gedgrave Parish Council, New Orford Town Trust, local businesses, and others, funds were raised for half of the initial £265,000.

A business plan was sent to funding bodies, including the National Lottery Heritage Fund, requesting various amounts to make up the remaining funding. The National Lottery rejected the application for £15,000, although they approved of the plan, because they were not confident that the remainder of the funding could be raised.

A hasty meeting of the fundraising team was convened, and a revised application was submitted to the National Lottery for the total remaining £132,500. This was approved, the initial funding was complete and work began.

The investment in the revitalised town hall has resulted in the building now being used for a wider range of activities previously not possible. Orford Town Hall is now used regularly for sporting events, family celebrations, regular craft fairs, Orford School collaborations with a professional puppet company and fundraising balls. Most Saturday mornings the building is home to a vibrant, well attended Orford Country Market which has become very successful and has provided a platform for local businesses such as Pump Street Bakery and The Mixing Bowl to promote their products before investing in their own premises.

Amendment to Newsletter 62, Autumn 2024 'Our coastline and our countryside' p. 20.

The paragraph beginning 'In quantifying the severity of this disruption' should read

'In quantifying the severity of this disruption, SEAS points out that the Examining Authority's report recommended that development consent should be granted to the first two of these proposals, East Anglia 1 North and East Anglia 2 offshore windfarms, but said in its conclusion that it was a finely balanced decision and warned of cumulative adverse impacts if

additional projects were brought to light. The then Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy granted the two Development Consent Orders in March 2022. Now all the subsequent planning applications are being separately put forward – and considered – on the basis that the substations at Friston are a fait accompli, with contracts agreed for the later development, and by this sleight of hand they can suddenly be claimed to be cheaper and less disruptive.'

Alde and Ore Association

34th Annual General Meeting & talk on wildlife

All welcome



Thursday, 24th April 2024, 6 p.m. (doors open from 5.30 p.m.)

The Old Generator Station, Kings Field, Aldeburgh IP15 5HY

After the formal AGM proceedings, author Jeremy Mynott, one of the leading lights in creating a new wetland at Shingle Street, will be giving a talk on The Wildlife of Shingle Street with wonderful photographs.

RSVP info@aldeandore.org

Directions. At the roundabout at the entrance to Aldeburgh take the small unnamed road opposite the Railway Arms (4th exit coming from A12, 1st exit coming from town centre) signposted 'Community Centre/Fire Station'. There is parking by the hall or along the road by the Kings Field. What3words: scorecard.ground.arrive

Volunteer Honorary Secretary

The search is on...



Would you like to be involved in the work of taking care of our rivers?

An exciting opportunity has arisen for an enthusiastic volunteer to join us as Honorary Secretary. You will carry out and take responsibility for the administrative tasks needed to facilitate board meetings including preparation of agendas and minutes. Time commitment would be approximately 3-8 hours a quarter.

Minuting and basic computer skills are required and an interest in the estuary area is desirable.

If you, or someone you know, would like to get more involved with the work of the Association please email Alison Andrews at chairman@aldeandore.org.

Alde & Ore Association events in 2025

Annual General Meeting and talk on Wildlife at Shingle Street, Thursday, 24 April, 6 p.m.
Old Generator Station, Aldeburgh (see separate invitation for more details).

Annual Barbecue, Sunday, 10 August, at Blackheath.

Walks are being planned, but if you would like to organise (with our help)
a walk in the estuary area please get in touch at info@aldeandore.com.

Please send your observations about the Association and its activities, suggestions for articles in the newsletter and your photographs to the editorial team at newsletter@aldeandore.org. Digital images should be submitted as jpg files. The newsletter is prepared and published twice a year by the Alde and Ore Association, registered charity number 1154583, and printed on recycled paper by Leiston Press. Our thanks go to all the authors and to all the photographers and artists for the use of their photographs and illustrations. Please note that signed contributions may not reflect the views of the Association as a whole.